File POST MORTEM

11/13/69

Dear Howard,

your letter of 11/10 is quite persuasive. I'm glad the enclosures are extra copies, for I do not want to take the time to read them now, when my mind will be reluctant to go wholeheartedly to that subject, having been preoccupied by other thoughts. I'm trying to get the work in hand, on another aspect, done.

I had forgotten the Humes testimony you cite, and you quote Finck in N.O. accurately. It is not that I am opposed to the front-slice theory, it being my own. It is simply that I am reluctant to visualize more and larger conspiracies than there need have been. I think it unlikely Finck was entirely unaware of it if tissue had been removed from the anterior neck, and I think on this the panel would not have lied, and I also think a lab man, unfamiliar with procedures in crimes of violence, could have been unaware of slicing away what was crucial evidence when he did it. When he later found out, what was he to have done? Proclaimed he'd loused up the autopsy of a President, he medical macher that he was, in charge of labs and all that? My own thinking it that it is unlikely, faced with no exit for the imputed rear entrance, it did occur to Finck that a specimen should have been taken from the front, unless it was already gone and he looked and satisfied himself visually there was no chance.

Humes is caught in another of his lies: that he phoned Perry to learn if there had been a trach. He knew it before he touchdd the body, as I explain in WII. So, if he took a sample from there, it could not have been innocent, which argues your way. However, if we are to accept the Dallas estimate as accurate (as I have), it is not necessary, as you say, that the cut have gone through it in a way to bisect the 5mm measurement. It could have been the 3mm way, which would have made it harder to detect.

Your explanation on the brain is persuasive. That testimony has been out of my mind for some time. I'll be rereading it again before I return to WMII. There is something you might have added: this also destroyed any evidences of a wound of entry. All I remembered was the "we had virtually no work" part, not the laying back. However, I'd be inclined to believe that, given the intention to do a good job, it could still have been learned, I think that by the time Finck got there it had been decided on the higher level that with Oswald in hand they'd do only what made it look that he alone did it. Finck was there because he is a wound expert. He is not as much a forensic pathologist as he makes out, according to both Wecht and Nichols.

Yet with this I cannot agree:"I cannot ~~imagine~~ in my wildest dreams imagine why Humes would be so absolutely stupid and mindless as to remove the brain - unless, of course, this was done before Finck was called". And you suggest it was. I do not believe this. I am inclined to believe the idea of getting Finck come up about the time the body was first viewed. I can believe that Humes was satisfied he had two wounds of entrance and nothing else counted, so if Finck saw them it was enough. I do not insist, I mere suggest this could have been in his mind in those moments of turmoil, shock and tragedy...Let me reformulate Wecht for you, and substitute for an Army man in a Navy hospital the presence of general-rank officers who were explicit in what they did not want done. It is not a justification of Finck, but what I think is a more likely explanation than incompetence.

In your tracings of Z290-1, remember, it is not only the position of the body but its relationship to fixed things and what part or how much of it shows and doesn't show in each frame....Your Ricket interview is better than you represent. ...Shirt slits: good idea...Nothing else from Gary on Harper....Last comment on the doctors: they are all perjurers. They are not, automatically, conspirators. If you refer further to this, I'll have it under WM. Thanks and good luck.

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